

Strategic Objective Close-Out Report

USAID/Russia

Name: "Increased, Better Informed Citizens' Participation in Political and Economic Decision-Making"

Number: SO 118-021

SO Approval Date: 1999

SO Completed: 2001

Geographic Area: Russian Federation

Total Cost: \$36,465,000

1. Principal Implementing Partners:

- World Learning
- American Center for International Labor Solidarity
- International Research and Exchanges Board
- International Republican Institute
- National Democratic Institute
- International Foundation for Electoral Systems
- Internews
- Press Development Institute
- Eurasia Foundation
- Initiative for Social Action and Renewal
- Woman's Consortium
- The Moscow School of Political Studies
- Institute for Election System Development

2. Summary of Overall Impact at SO and IR level

Performance over the life of this SO kept on track. In 2000, some activities exceeded expectations. In 2001, deficiencies in the Performance Monitoring Plan's indicators made it impossible for us to certify whether we met our targets. For the two indicators for which we do have data, one exceeded its target and one failed to meet it.

By the end of the SO in 2001, USAID's support to Russia's democratic transition fostered an environment where citizens have a greater voice at all levels. Because building a democracy takes far longer than five or ten years, USAID identified certain intermediate results to show progress in the nearer term. By 2001, USAID made progress toward a number of results, such as the administration of free and fair elections both nationally and locally, increased public access to information that is needed for informed choices, and participation in the NGO sector as an alternative to the ballot box for making economic and political decisions.

The 2000 Presidential Election was certified by international observers as generally free and fair, and a meaningful competition of candidates represented a range of political views. However, international observers noted that media coverage of the election was not as balanced or as objective as had been hoped. Subsequent to the elections, media also alleged other improprieties. Despite challenges to press freedoms, the reach of the independent media continuously expanded during the life of this SO, providing the public with an array of information needed to make informed political and economic choices. Russians are not only using the information at the ballot box, but also are working through NGOs to influence policy making, and NGOs in turn are focusing more and more on advocacy and policy input, often at the local level where citizens needs are most efficiently addressed. In terms of labor, Russian

workers are paid on a timelier basis and are working under safer conditions with the support of their unions. In summary, progress was made in helping media, NGOs, labor unions, and political parties to voice citizen interests and concerns.

Key intermediate results are: 1) free and fair elections administered nationally and locally; 2) more programming produced and broadcast by independent stations in the region; and 3) NGOs advocate more effectively for members' interests. Solid progress toward all three results shows that the programs stayed on track. International election observers certified the presidential election as generally free and fair. The reach of independent media expanded and exceeded expectations in 2000, with approximately 60 percent of viewers in the regions watching independently produced news programming, an increase of 20 percent over 1999. More cities in target regions established and used mechanisms for NGO-local government interaction (48 cities in 2000 compared with 22 the year before).

3. Summary of Activities and Success Stories

In 2001, the VOICE coalition for election monitoring registered as an NGO and expanded its activities from 7 to 15 regions. By the end of this SO, it was on the path to achieving its goal of monitoring the Presidential Elections in 2004. There are few reliable statistics on how much programming is produced and broadcast by regional non-state TV stations, but it is clear from a variety of reports that non-state regional TV stations have become an established source of local news. Our goal of 50 percent viewership for locally produced newscasts may have been reached in some major markets. A USAID-sponsored NGO, Internews, setup a regional news competition for local reporting which gave local stations even more incentive to improve the quality of their programming, brought together representatives of regional television stations that previously worked in isolation, raised the accomplishments of local news programs to national attention, and motivated a young and rapidly developing community of journalists to take their role as builders of civil society seriously. The televised awards ceremony, "News — LocalTime," itself won Internews a prestigious TEFI award in 2001.

To measure the growth of civil society, it is useful to observe the behavior of NGOs. In FY 2001, nearly two-thirds of USAID-supported NGOs reported that they had worked in coalitions with other civic groups to advance common causes. Likewise, 86 percent of these NGOs said that volunteers help them, and most reported broad community support. For example, Siberian Charity Week in April 2001 drew on 120,000 volunteers who staged 650 philanthropic events, supported by \$53,500 in labor and in-kind donations. The importance of NGOs was confirmed at events such as NGO fairs and competitions. Further, by the end of the SO period, representatives of regional governments were observing the workings of NGOs closely as they sat on NGO boards. At least three regional governments have adopted NGO grant-making procedures as models for selecting service providers. USAID-funded NGOs were integrally involved in organizing the Kremlin's Civic Forum in the fall of 2001 and ensured that it remained a civil society-led forum rather than becoming a means for the GOR to organize NGOs for their purposes.

USAID helped establish the principle that no party is above the law by aiding legal clinics that successfully challenged government actions in the courts. During the final 18-month period, these clinics represented the interests of 7,000 workers and 220 trade unions in 2,720 hearings, resulting in \$222,700 in awards.

Russia's progress toward full participatory democracy is uneven. Although there are signs of consolidating state power, civil society continues to grow. However, the free flow of ideas and information appears threatened by government pressure on media outlets and other sources of independent information. Such pressure forced a change in management at NTV and the removal (at least temporarily) of TV6 from the airwaves, compromising the ability of what were Russia's last national television networks to provide information independent of the state. These changes also have hurt many regional television stations, particularly those that depended on TV6 for programming and other support. Nevertheless, the number of regional non-state media continues to increase, supported by technical assistance from USAID-supported Internews and the Press Development Institute.

4. Prospects for the Future

Political party development faces challenges in the prelude to parliamentary elections in 2003 and a presidential election in 2004. A law on political parties, passed in May 2001, reflects the Kremlin's stricter limits on political party activity. The law's full effect was not apparent in FY 2001. Under the new law, candidates for federal office can only be nominated by political parties; it is unclear whether this restriction will also restrict political participation. The law is likely to reduce the number of parties from more than 140 to less than 20, and it is unclear whether the five major parties will gain more popular support or simply have fewer competitors.

5. Lessons Learned for Application to other SOs

The data for many of SO 118-021's indicators were not available in time to meet the reporting deadlines. Also, national statistics change slowly and often do not reflect regional differences and dynamics at the sub-national level. Efforts should be made to measure progress to better reflect results in selected USAID target regions, rather than Russia as a whole.

6. Summary of Indicators and their Usefulness for Performance Management

All indicators were refocused during the life of the SO to better reflect results in selected USAID target regions, rather than Russia as a whole.

Intermediate Result 2.1.1: Free and fair elections administered nationally and locally.

Indicator: Participation in national and local elections is certified free and fair by observers.

Comments: This indicator was revised within the framework of SO 118-021: More Open, Participatory Society.

Intermediate Result 21.2: More programming produced and broadcast by independent stations in the region.

Indicator: More programming produced and broadcast by independent TV stations in the regions (Percent of viewership watching non-state regional TV).

Comments: There are few reliable statistics on how much programming is produced and broadcast by regional non-state TV stations, but it is clear from a variety of reports that non-state regional TV stations have become an established source of local news.

Intermediate Result 21.3: NGO sector provides alternative to ballot box for participating in economic and political decision making.

Indicator: Number of cities in target regions that have established and are using mechanisms for NGO-local government.

Comments: USAID/Russia had nearly achieved the goal of establishing mechanisms for government-NGO interaction in all target cities in 2000, and hence this was no longer a useful indicator. It was replaced by IR 2.1.3.1, which more directly tracks USAID's current NGO program.

Intermediate Result 2.1.3.1: NGOs advocate more effectively for member's needs/interests.

Indicator: In target regions, number of NGOs that provide input to legislative process on issues affecting their needs/interests (Number of expert commentaries submitted to local authorities on policy issues.)

Comments: This replaced the indicator above, this target directly responds to USAID's 2001 NGO Program.

7. Appendix

Reports:

USAID/Russia R4 April 10, 2001

USAID/Russia R4 April 2000

USAID/Russia R4 April 1999

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